

Synergizing Hole Accumulation and Transfer on Composite Ni/CoO_x for Photoelectrochemical Water Oxidation

Wei Wang,^{*a} Marc Heggen,^b Wei Cui,^c Benjamin Probst,^c Roger Alberto^c and Chunhua Cui,^{*d}

^a School of Materials and Energy, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu, 610054, China.

^b Ernst Ruska Center for Microscopy and Spectroscopy with Electrons, Forschungszentrum Juelich GmbH, 52425 Juelich, Germany.

^c Department of Chemistry, University of Zurich, Winterthurerstr. 190, CH-8057 Zurich, Switzerland.

^d Molecular Electrochemistry Laboratory, Institute of Fundamental and Frontier Sciences, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu, 610054, China.

* Correspondence: wei.wang@uestc.edu.cn (W.W.); chunhua.cui@uestc.edu.cn (C.C.)

Materials and Methods

A nanostructured hematite was used as a model support for catalyst deposition. Firstly, the β -FeOOH nanorods were synthesized by a hydrothermal deposition onto the F-doped SnO₂ glass (FTO, TEC 15A 3.0 mm, XOP Física glass company) in a solution containing 0.15 M FeCl₃·6H₂O (Sigma-Aldrich) and 1.0 M NaNO₃ (Sigma-Aldrich) at 95 °C for 1.5 hours. Then this hematite substrate has been annealed in air at 600 °C for 2 hours. Transient electro-reduction of Ni (NiCl₂·6H₂O, General-reagent) and Co ions (CoCl₂·6H₂O, General-reagent) in the electrolyte (pH=4) containing 0.1 M metal ions at -1.1 V versus Ag/AgCl with a charge density of 0.20 mC cm⁻² for H2T-NiO_x and H2T-CoO_x, respectively. For the synthesis of H2T-NiCoO_x, Ni and Co with a charge density of 0.20 mC cm⁻² was successively deposited. Several parallel samples were prepared and tested to confirm the repeatability.

TiO_x was prepared on hematite using an atomic layer deposition system at 120°C (PICSUN R-200). Tetrakis(dimethylamido)-titanium(IV) (99.999%, Sigma-Aldrich, kept at 85°C) and H₂O were used as Ti and O sources, respectively. Ti precursor was kept in the chamber for 1.6 seconds under 150 sccm N₂ flow, followed by a 6-second N₂ purge. H₂O was kept for 0.1 seconds under 200 sccm N₂ flow, followed by a 6-second N₂ purge. TiO_x deposition has been calculated to be 0.50 Å per cycle.

A field emission scanning electron microscope (SEM Zeiss Supra 50 VP) was applied to characterize the surface morphology and surface texture. Compositional maps were acquired with the energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDX).

The related electrochemical measurements were implemented by using an SP-300 Potentiostat, Bio-logic. All measurements were carried out in a 1.0 M NaOH alkaline electrolyte in a custom-designed Cappuccino Teflon cell with a quartz window.

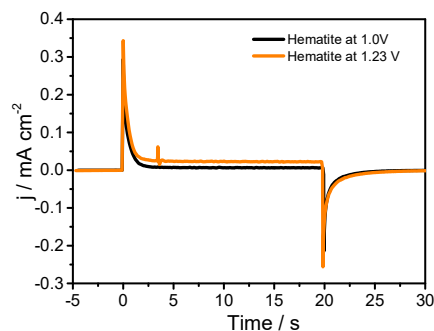


Figure S1. Transient photocurrent response of hematite under chopped light.

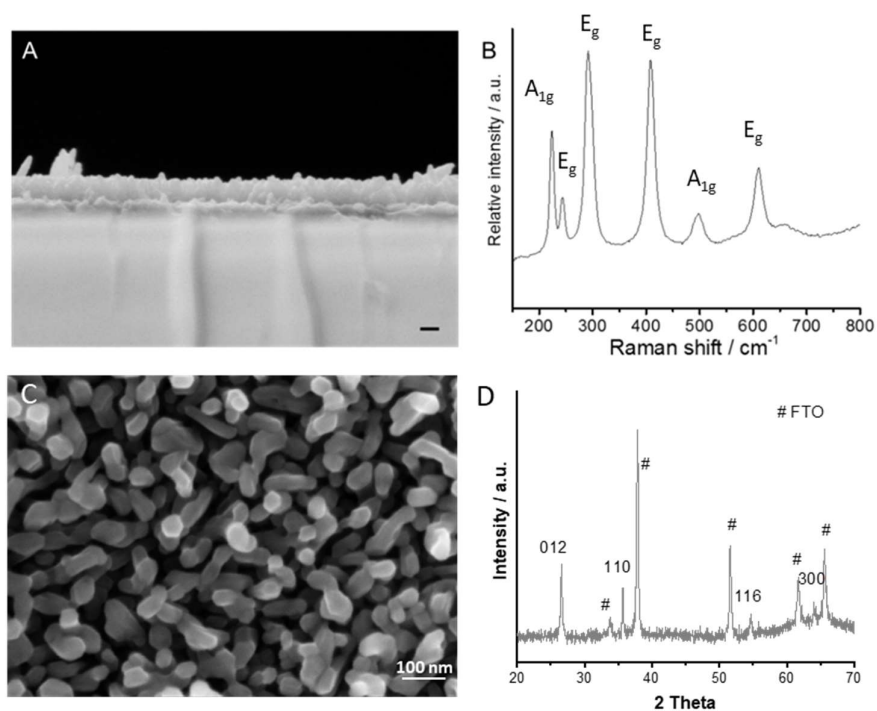


Figure S2. A, C) TEM image of cross-section and surface morphology of H2T (scale bar 100 nm), B) Raman and D) XRD of H2T.

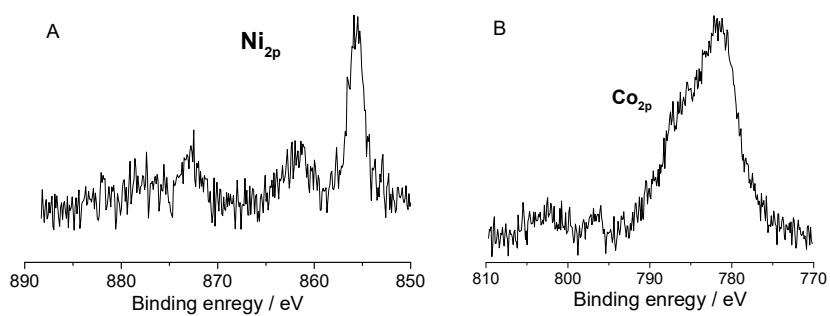


Figure S3. X-Ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy (XPS) plots after background subtraction show the formation of A) NiO_x and B) CoO_x in air.

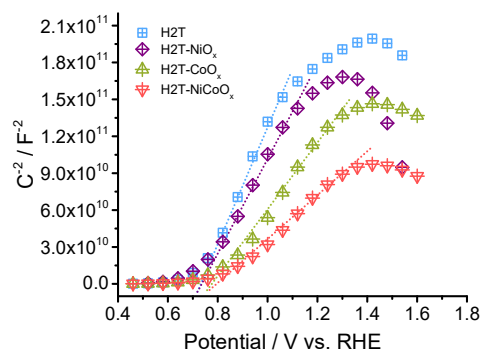


Figure S4. Mott-Schottky plots of H2T, H2T-NiO_x, H2T-CoO_x and H2T-Ni/CoO_x collected at 1 kHz in the dark. The slope of the Mott-Schottky plots,¹ $\text{slope} = \frac{2}{D_N e \epsilon \epsilon_0}$, are used to evaluate the donor density D_N , meaning lower slope, higher donor density.

1. F. Fabregat-Santiago, G. Garcia-Belmonte, J. Bisquert, P. Bogdanoff and A. Zaban, *J. Electrochem. Soc.*, 2003, **150**, E293-E298.